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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 000523

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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT ZUMA'S VISIT LAUNCHES NEW
ERA IN RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA

Classified By: DAN MOZENA FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In his maiden foreign diplomatic foray since assuming office, South African President Jacob Zuma visited Angola August 19 -21. Both the Director of African Affairs of the Angolan Ministry of External Relations and South Africa's resident ambassador in Luanda told the Ambassador the visit was a "grand success." Replete with symbolism (laying of wreaths to commemorate Angola's first president and its unknown soldier, plus a visit to the site of an ANC refugee camp during the anti-apartheid struggle), the visit saturated the local media. The visit also had a heavy substantive agenda, both in the diplomatic and economic arenas. Zuma's entourage included a dozen ministers and over 150 businessmen.

¶2. (C) On the diplomatic front, Zuma's visit marks a turning point in the heretofore frosty relations between southern Africa's two heavy-weights. Using almost identical words, the two presidents separately termed the visit the launch of a new era of cooperation, committing to build a strategic partnership through continued high-level engagement. They pledged to create "a common voice against the grave challenges of humanity," including environmental degradation, terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and political and religious fundamentalism. As Zuma told a session of the National Assembly, "Angola is an important player in southern Africa ... South Africa and Angola need to have common positions and actions to benefit the region." According to MIREX's African Affairs Director, the two heads of state discussed a range of regional issues, including Zimbabwe, DRC, Madagascar, Sudan and Somalia; on Zimbabwe, he said, the leaders agreed that SADC would need to intervene more to push implementation of the Global Political Agreement and to provide support to the nation's economic recovery. On Madagascar, the presidents agreed to support ongoing reconciliation efforts of former Mozambique president Chissano. The South African Ambassador said that on the notion of a United States of Africa, the leaders agreed the best approach is to focus now on strengthening regional organizations.

¶3. (C) In the economic realm, the Angola-South Africa Business Forum was the centerpiece. Headed by Economic Minister Manuel Nunes Junior, the Angolans made a strong pitch for increased trade and investment between the two countries. Declaring that Angola is open to "know-how, innovation, science and modernization," Junior urged the South Africans to explore opportunities in energy, water, oil/gas, agriculture, fisheries, mining, transport and higher education. In his response, South African Commerce Minister Rob Davis replied that he is optimistic that a new era of cooperation has begun with Angola, stressing that it is important to promote initiatives between businesses of the two countries. A skeptical South African Ambassador told Ambassador that the proof of the pudding is the tasting, and it remains to be seen what deals emerge from the Business Forum.

¶4. (C) Comment: Personal animosity between President Dos Santos and former South African President Mbeki had kept Angola-South Africa relations in the deep freeze for quite a while. Zuma's singling out Angola as the destination for his first official foreign visit was well noted and duly appreciated by his Angolan hosts. Angola does offer South

Africa a potentially lucrative partner for greatly expanded trade and investment. The biggest obstacle may well prove to be a clash of pride between the two nations, with Angola harboring notions of some day playing a much bigger role diplomatically and economically in the region, an expanded role that could clash with rather than complement South Africa's own preeminence.

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